DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 042 448 JC 700 210

AUTHOR	Maslow, Richard
TITLE	A Positive Stand on Student-Centeredness in Teaching: A Matter of Definition.
PUB DATE	70
NOTE	5p.; Paper presented at the American Psychological Association Convention, Miami Beach, Florida, September 1970
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.35
DESCRIPTORS	*Junior Colleges, *Mass Instruction, *Small Group Instruction, *Student Teacher Relationship, *Teaching Techniques
IDENTIFIERS	*California

ABSTRACT

One approach to teaching college students at San Joaquin Delta College, California, emphasizes student-centeredness. Demanding more than a non-directive approach to students, it requires that a teacher know and communicate with each and every student, putting student needs and interests first. A recent use of such an approach involved 275 students meeting twice a week for lectures and once a week in groups of 25. Practice at applying the knowledge gained from the lectures, group meetings, text, and outside readings was provided through workbook exercises. The group meetings permitted discussion of course material, but emphasized individual student awareness and expression. Tests were real learning experiences, with answer sheets providing immediate knowledge of results. (JO)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED042448

A POSITIVE STAND ON STUDENT-CENTEREDNESS IN TEACHING: A MATTER OF DEFINITION

by

Richard Maslow

San Joaquin Delta College, Stockton, California

Presented at the

American Psychological Association Convention

Miami Beach, Florida

September, 1970

JC 700 210

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

OCT 09 1970

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGE
INFORMATION

A Positive Stand on Student-Centeredness in Teaching: A Matter of Definition

by

Richard Maslow

San Joaquin Delta College, Stockton, California

I am in favor of student-centered methods of teaching.

I teach at a junior college -- that may sound like a simple statement, but the rest of my colleagues on the panel work at four year colleges, and therein lies the difference. I teach at a junior college -- that is the only job teachers have at a junior college. I am not really sure that for each of you teaching is the main responsibility of your employment. You supervise graduate students, do research, write, publish, and sometimes teach undergraduate students. I am a teacher. I feel no pressure to produce research or to publish; nor am I concerned about academic promotions.

When we talk of student-centeredness, are we dealing with methods or attitudes? This is a distinction, I feel, that becomes blurred between the principle and the application. Maybe being a student-centered teacher is a matter of personal definition. However, as far as I am concerned if you can't consider yourself student-centered in your approach to teaching you probably don't belong in a classroom.

In some of the literature lately, teachers who express opposition to the student-centered approach show that they have not really ever tried a student-centered approach. What they report

is failure with what is really a non-directive approach to teaching. Just because you let your students decide what they want to learn or how they feel they should learn it doesn't make you student-centered. I feel the non-directive approach is a cop-out. If you get paid to teach -- TEACH! That is, learn to be good at it. There is no way to have a student-centered course if you don't know your students or put the interest and needs of the students first. If you hide behind the podium and let your students look up at you and the backs of each other's heads, you're only fooling yourself if you think your students are becoming involved with your course. Your class may be only a twice weekly convocation for them.

Student-centered teachers communicate with every student in the room, no matter how large the enrollment. Communicate here really refers to the message being delivered and that same message being received. The former without the latter is a big bore for everybody. When a stand-up, podium-anchored lecturer that never dreamed of himself as student oriented makes a complex abstract concept concrete and relevant to the lives of the students in front of him, he falls into the realm of the student-centered teacher.

There are, naturally, many approaches one may take to develop a student oriented course. For the past three years I have found the following method effective. I teach one class of 275 students each semester. In four weeks time I know the names of all the students. My class size and teaching load are considerably different from yours. I lecture to the entire group on Mondays and Fridays for one hour. During the other three days I hold hour

long sessions, meeting the students in 11 groups of 25 students each. It is in these seminar groups that I get to know each student personally. What is probably more important is that in this informal type group meeting the students get to know each other and also get to know me.

My entire approach to the course is designed for the students to learn rather than any simplicity in the teaching method. My prime responsibility is to see that each student learns and understands those concepts which are relevant to the course and himself.

To help the student, I wrote a workbook for my course. This workbook is comprised of open-end questions that can be answered in a few words, a phrase, or a sentence. The answers to the workbook questions come from several sources: from the lectures, from the seminars, from the text, and from outside readings -- from, in essence, total involvement with the course and the material. The workbook material provides the basis for all examination questions. With the workbook the student plays a more active role in the teaching-learning process.

The entire testing process is designed to help the student pass the course. All tests in my course are multiple choice tests given on immediate feedback answer sheets. As the student chooses the a, b, c, or d answer, he is immediately informed by the answer sheet whether his selection is correct. The student works on one question until he finds the key indicating the correct response. This method makes each test truly a learning experience, as the student is shown the correct answer to each question as soon as he

has attempted it. Immediate knowledge of results, as we know, is an effective tool of learning.

If a student does not score at least 75%, he has the opportunity to retest again; in fact, he may retest twice. Thus, each student has three attempts to pass the test and meet the criterion for the C grade.

In the weekly seminar sessions, there is very little effort made to coordinate the activities with the lecture material, as the seminars are a series of weekly games designed to help the student understand himself and express his feelings concerning his society. However, these weekly seminars are not all fun and games. As the students involve themselves seriously in complex and trying situations, they have the opportunity to take a critical look at themselves and their milieu. One of the most important outgrowths of the seminars has been in this area of self-discovery, for I feel that many students have come to see themselves for the first time as viable, meaningful individuals, aware of themselves and society and the complexities of both.

This is what I feel student-centeredness is all about. Not being self-satisfied that you teach a subject, that you have lectured well, but the satisfaction you get when you know that your students have learned something: preferably something about themselves that they can use to live more effective lives.